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AN EASTERN STORY.

HASSAN, the wood-cutter, from morn till night
Toiled at his heavy task among the trees
With willing hand; and, with a heart upright,
Three times a day he prayed upon his knees.

At last, long years of work had worn his strength,
His arm no more could level hearty blows,
And scarcely would his toil at greatest length
Supply the simple wants the poor man knows.

Still he worked cheerful on, with humble trust
That for his needs the Lord would yet provide.
One day he prayed—"Oh, Prophet! oh, Most Just!
Who hold'st the highest place at Allah's side—

"Thy servant now is poor, and weak, and old,
And still, if Allah bids, will labor on—
But, if the prayer be right, and not too bold,
Do thou pray for him that his task be done.

"Pray the Most Wise that to a single day
The allotted earnings of my life he send,
Then let my breath pass peacefully away,
And in abundance let my labors end."

That night the woodcutter in slumber lay,
When to his sleeping eyes a vision came—
The Prophet's form—shining with light like day—
The Prophet's voice addressed him by his name:

"Hassan, thy prayer is heard; life's lengthened years
The Almighty crowds into a single day.
To-morrow's sunset ends thy cares and fears,
To-morrow brings thy age's destined pay."

With morning's dawn the old man grateful wakes,
And, duly turning westward, kneels in praise.
As his prayer-carpet from the ground he takes,
A heap of money meets his startled gaze.

The Almighty's gift he knows. "To-day my last,
The day on which my labors all are done;
Shall, with this bounty, happily be passed,
And others' blessings greet my setting sun."

A feast he makes; he welcomes in the poor;
And for himself a single meal he saves—
The feast is finished; at the open door
A stranger stands, who, for admission craves.

"Have pity on an outcast—give me food,
And peace rest on thee." With quick reply,
"Come, eat with me," says Hassan; "God is good,
What matter if with half a meal I die?"

The stranger ate, and grateful took his way.
Hassan was left alone, when once again
A cry disturbed the calm of closing day,
The cry of one in hunger's bitter pain.

The old man hastes to help the beggar in,
And gives him all that for himself he meant;
Wishing indeed it had more plenty been,
And feeling in his heart a sweet content.

Fasting, but peaceful, Hassan slept that night.
The blessings of the poor to heaven rise,
And, borne by angels clothed in holy light,
Enter the pearly gates of Paradise.

That night, once more, the Prophet's form appeared,
He spoke to Hassan, and he sweetly smiled,
"The blessings of the poor the Lord has heard,
The Lord approves thee as His worthy child.

"And now He bids thee as His steward live,
Live out thy destined, lengthened years below,
To thee his gracious hand will freely give,
And what he gives do thou again bestow."

Long years in happiness old Hassan lived,
The poor prayed for him; Allah heard their prayers,
And, when life closed, he that pure joy received,
Which for his faithful the Most High prepares.

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THE SIBYLS OF NATURE.

NATURE offers many choices,
Of her bounteous store,
Best of all those Sibyl voices,
Floating ever o'er.
Now she hests that soul rejoices,
Now she starts a scorching tear,
Now a hymn of love she chaunteth,
Now she sends a chill of fear,
Now she hath a tone that haunteth,
Like the bodings of a Seer!

'Tis the Poet in our being,
Hears this language all around,
Sees in hearing, hears in seeing,
Wakes responsive to the sound!
For to all is something given,
Of that pure poetic sense,
Coming like a breath of Heaven,
Coming, and we know not whence.
And so silently it stealeth,
Seldom heard by busy men,
Now it hideth, now revealeth,
Yet we know not where or when.

'Tis said that if our ear
Were delicate enough to hear
The sounds, that faintest undulate,
Daily we might all discern
The voices of the ancient sages,
The poet's triumph and the school's debate,
And passing through the streets, could learn
The wisdom of past ages;
Since words once spoken,
In waves unbroken
For ever flood the air,
And though our senses may despair
To note the token,
They still are floating there.

So Nature's voice is everywhere,
And all may hear at times,
But now and then come sport and care,
And we may lose its chimes.
'Tis then the poet's ear more keen
Must listen for the rest,
Who gathereth from every scene
A voice for their bequest.
Thus Poesy is not creation,
Sprung from the Poet's brain,
But Nature's own reverberation,
By poet rendered plain.

JUSTIN WINBOR.